

relations of rational creatures with the Creator, the general nature of the economy disclosed by the Messiah, the system of moral principles and rules, and the greatness of the future prospects of man, they seemed to have no Concern in *that* religion, and impatiently interrupted such discourse with the observation—That is not experience.

Others he has heard continually recurring to two or three points of opinion, adopted perhaps in servile addiction to a system, or perhaps by some chance seizure of the individual's preference, and asserted to be the life and essence of Christianity. These opinions he has heard zealously though not argumentatively defended, even when they were not attacked or questioned. If they were called in question, it was an evidence not less of depraved principle than of perverted judgment. All other religious truths were represented as deriving their authority and importance purely from these, and as being so wholly included and subordinate, that it is needless and almost impertinent to give them a distinct attention. The neglect of constantly repeating and enforcing these opinions was said to be the chief cause of the comparative failure of the efforts to promote Christianity in the world, and of the decay of particular religious societies. Though he perhaps could not perceive how these points were essential to Christianity, even admitting them to be true, they were made the sole and decisive standard for distinguishing between a genuine and a false profession of it. And perhaps they were applied in eager haste to any sentiment which *he* happened to express concerning religion as a test of its quality, and a proof of its corruptness.

Instances may have occurred in which he has observed some one idea or doctrine, that was not the distinctive peculiarity of any system, to have so monopolized the mind, that every conversation, from whatever point of the compass it started, was certain to find its way to the favourite topic, while he was sometimes fretted, sometimes amused, never much improved, by observing its instinctive progress to the appointed place. If his situation and connections rendered it unavoidable for him often to hear this unfortunate manner of discoursing on religion, his mind probably fell into a fault very similar to that of his well-meaning acquaintance. As this worthy man could never speak on the subject without soon bringing the whole of it

down to one particular